

GPs' Readiness to Develop Capabilities for Telehealth Medical Services

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Brett Sukara declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Business at the University of Technology Sydney. This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Abstract

Telehealth is an emerging healthcare field that holds promising solutions and benefits for many healthcare issues especially those related to chronic and acute aged care conditions. While governments have started to recognise its potential through investment in telehealth infrastructure, as in every novel concept, forces of resistance try to hold back and uphold the so-called status quo or no change which directly affects acceptance levels. Health workforce players, the subjects of this thesis namely; general practitioners (GPs) are a central patient reference point in Australia and internationally. GPs represent a substantial proportion of the health workforce and predominantly practice within professional silos. Long-standing systemic divisions alongside opposing interests, values, loyalties, practices and needs impact on their readiness to develop cross-disciplinary telehealth capabilities. Telehealth could become an important platform in tackling some of the most burdening chronic and acute medical conditions amongst Australian aged care population. As telehealth initiatives are highly dependent on clinicians' motivation, it is therefore vital to comprehend the matters of importance or value creation that relate to their readiness to become engaged and actively participate in cross-collaborative telehealth facilitated interactions to be capable to explore and measure those factors that may impact on implementation and utilisation of technology-based services.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is a lack of research that has examined a telehealth service value network with GPs at the centre, which has focused on telehealth essential operational service value network factors particularly when treating distant aged care conditions for which adequate capabilities are indispensable. To address gaps in the literature, this thesis has developed and empirically tested and validated a model that addresses the identified knowledge gaps in our current understanding of GPs' readiness to develop telehealth capabilities. These have been validated through GP clinicians' role viewpoint. This project has used a mixed methods methodological approach with qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys.

This study has made theoretical contribution to the service operations management and management literature by creating a means to define and measure levels of readiness for telehealth services through the establishment of a set of variables and units of measurement that are highly contextual, very unique and that can be applied across all health service sectors in addition to other important contributions. The study has produced multiple recommendations and outlined associated implications to GP practitioners, software developers and service providers and policy makers based on empirical data in the way that the telehealth platform is likely to affect them, how it should be run, particularly in terms of essential negotiations on safeguards, protocols, cross-collaborative resource distribution and workload management, knowledge sharing, relationship management, process phases, value drivers, enablers and essential capabilities amongst many other important factors. Detailed implications and recommendations to key stakeholders are provided in the final section of this thesis.

Keywords: Telehealth Technologies, General Practitioners, Readiness, Capabilities, Chronic and Acute Conditions, Value Creation, Telehealth Medical Services

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